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ABSTRACT

As part of an evaluation of the Alcohol and Drug Defense Program, a survey was conducted of 948 high school students in the Wake County Public School System, Raleigh, North Carolina. Of the 114 questions on the survey, 12 were related to students' after-school employment, current course grades, and future plans after high school graduation. Answers to questions about students' plans after high school indicated the following: approximately 74 percent planned to attend college; 9 percent planned to attend technical school; only 4.5 percent planned to get a job; and females were slightly more likely to plan to go to college. Concerning the employment status of the students, there was a clear link between the number of hours of employment per week and students earning lower grades. Students whose total work hours exceeded 20 per week were less than half as likely as nonworking students to be earning mostly As and Bs; students who worked 15-20 hours per week on school nights were less than half as likely as nonworking students to be earning mostly As and Bs. Consistent patterns of increasing work hours across grade levels, the high expectations students reported for college attendance, and gender differences in both grades earned and hours worked lend more support to the interpretation of "hours worked" as the causal factor in lower grades. (Six bar graphs illustrate future plans, percentage of students who work, hours worked, student grades, and percentage earning As and Bs.) (YLB)

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Eye on Evaluation

Evaluation and Research Department
Wake County Public School System, Raleigh, NC

E&R Report No. 94E.02
July 15, 1993

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT AND FUTURE PLANS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Author: Karen Banks (850-1863)

As part of our evaluation of the Alcohol and Drug Defense (ADD) Program, E&R staff conducted a survey of 948 WCPSS high school students this spring. The survey had 114 questions, most of which related to substance abuse. However, we also embedded 12 questions within the survey that related to students' after-school employment, current course grades, and future plans after high school graduation.

The evaluation report for the ADD program will include data on students' substance abuse. Data on students' employment, current course grades, and future plans are summarized below and in the charts that follow. The survey questions about students' plans after high school indicated that:

- Approximately 74% of all WCPSS high school students (78% of seniors) plan to attend college after high school graduation.
- An additional 9% of WCPSS students (12% of seniors) plan to attend technical school following high school graduation.
- Only 4.5% (3.8% of seniors) plan to get a job immediately after high school graduation.
- Females were slightly more likely than males (78% vs. 67%) to plan to go to college after high school graduation.

Concerning the employment status of WCPSS high school students, there was a **clear link between the number of hours of employment per week and students earning lower grades**. Other findings include:

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- Students whose *total* work hours (school nights plus weekends) exceed 20 per week are less than half as likely as nonworking students to be earning mostly A's and B's (18% vs. 45%).

- Students who work just 15 to 20 hours per week *on school nights* are less than half as likely as nonworking students to be earning grades that are mostly A's and B's (21% vs. 45%).

- The percentage of students who work increases from about 24% of 9th grade students to about 73% of 12th grade students. Overall, about 48% of high school students work.

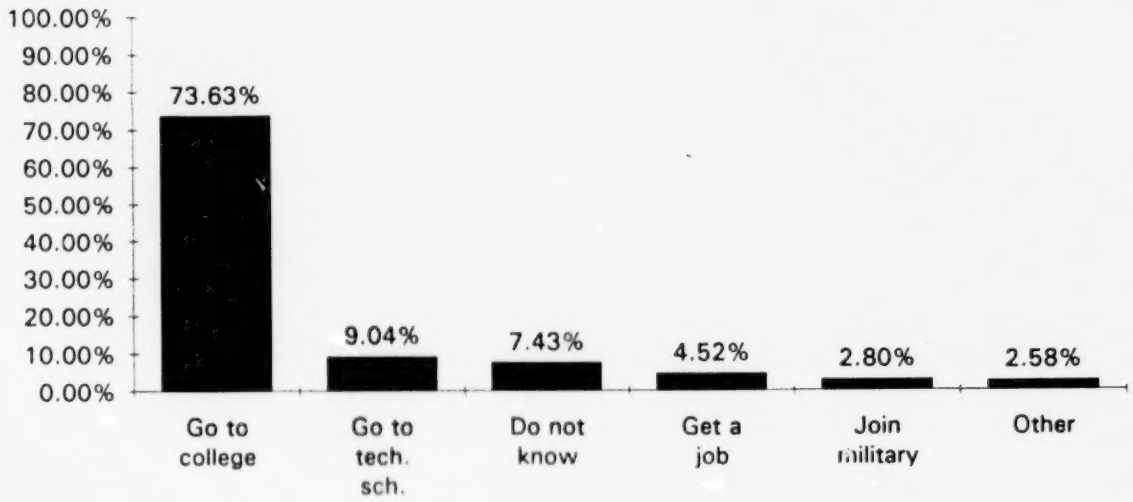
- The percentage of students who work *more than 20 hours per week* also increases across grade levels, from 4% of 9th grade students to 22% of 12th grade students.

- Males were more likely to work than females (57% vs. 46%). Males were about twice as likely as females to work more than 20 hours per week (17.4% vs. 8.9%).

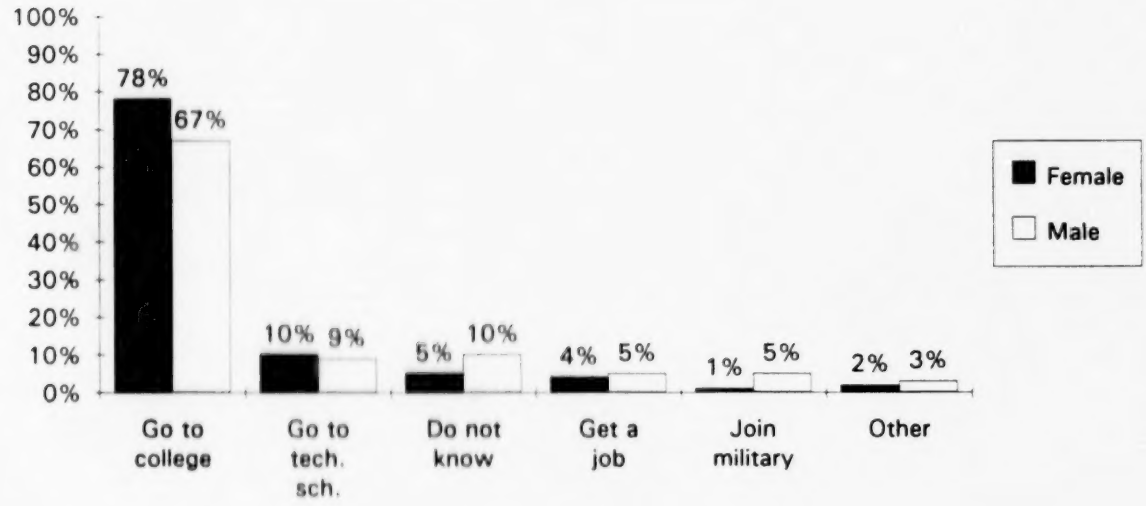
WCPSS has a rigorous high school program and it is not surprising that there is a link between the grades students earn and the number of hours they work. It is impossible to determine causality when correlational data show a relationship between two or more variables, and an alternate interpretation of the data would suggest that students who have poorer grades, or some other causal factor, choose to work more hours. The consistent patterns of increasing work hours across grade levels, the high expectations the students reported for college attendance, and the gender differences in both grades earned and hours worked lend more support to the interpretation of "hours worked" as the causal factor in lower grades, rather than vice versa, but these data should be interpreted cautiously.

cc: Team Leaders
E&R Staff
Board of Education
Cabinet
Principals

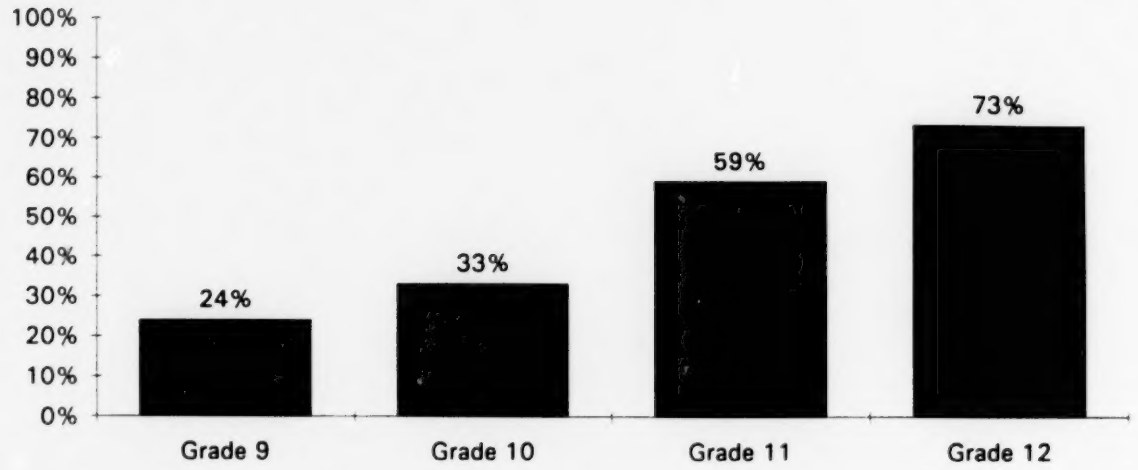
High School Students' Future Plans



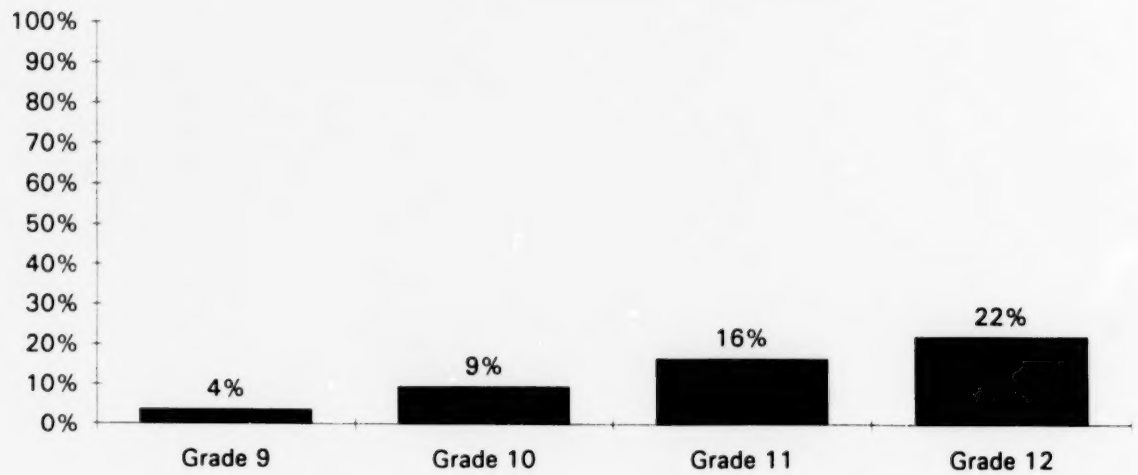
High School Students' Future Plans, By Gender



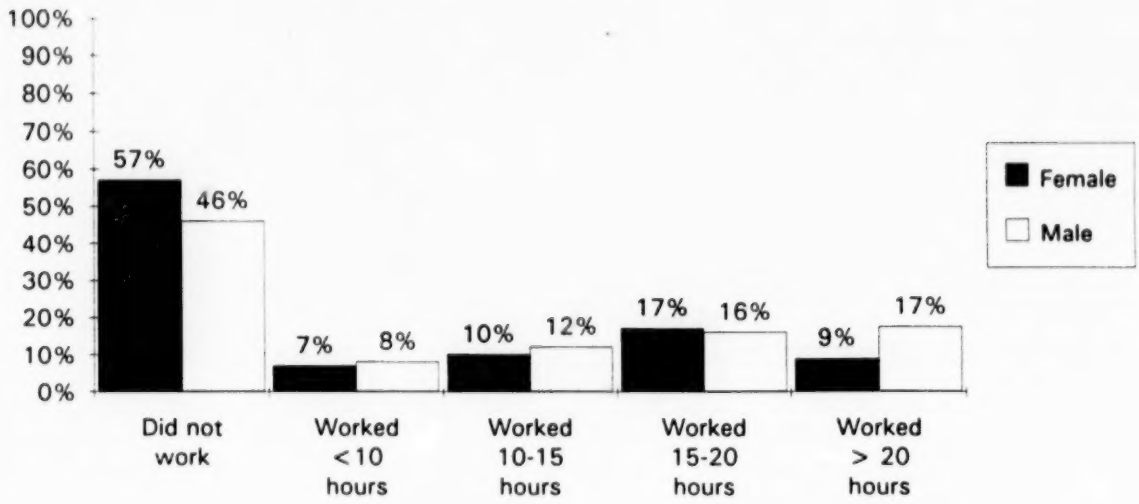
Percentage of High School Students Who Work, By Grade Level



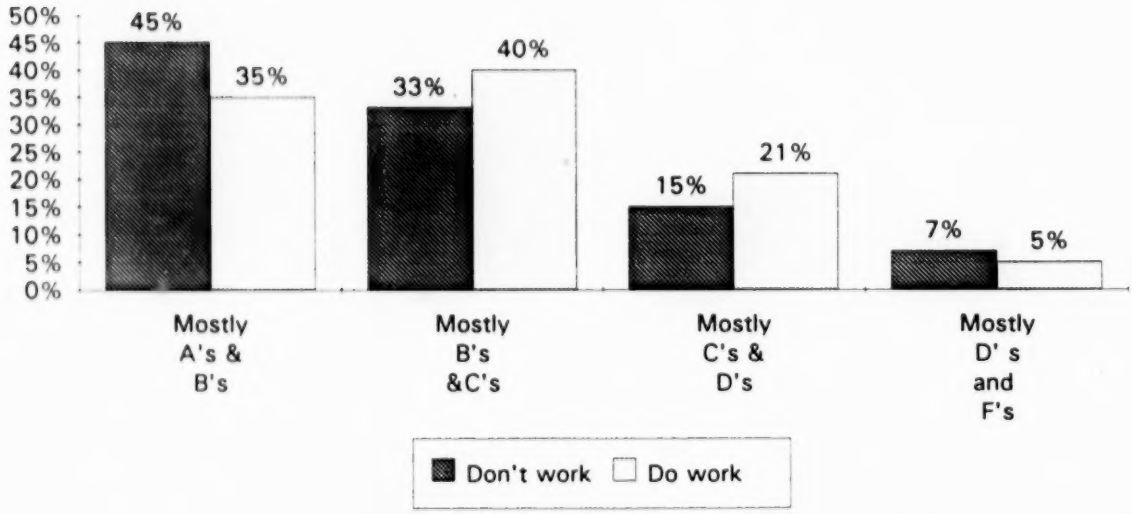
Percentage of Students Working More Than 20 Hours Per Week, By Grade Level



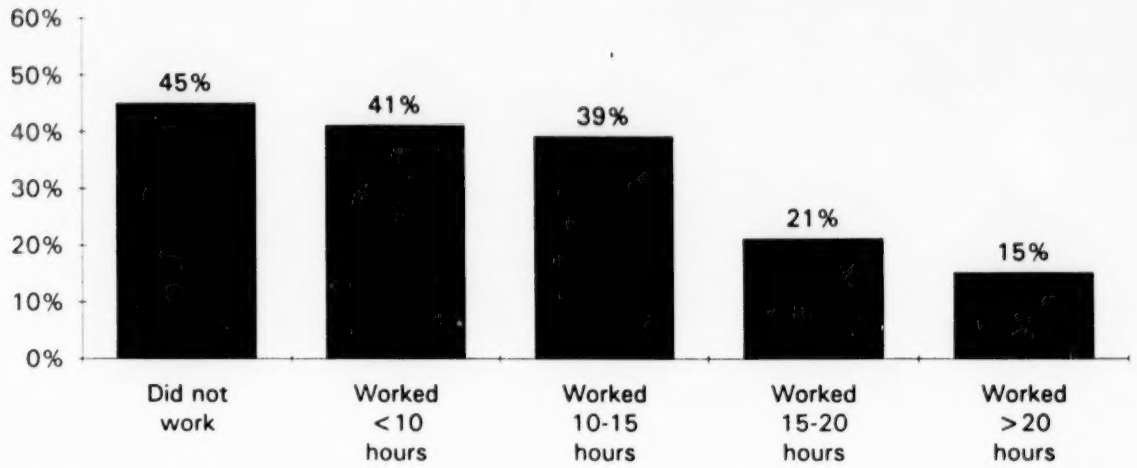
Number of Hours Worked, By Gender



Student Grades, By Employment Status



Percentage of Students Earning A's and B's, By Hours Worked on School Nights



Percentage of Students Earning A's and B's, By Hours Worked on Weekends